

## Community resources

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*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 09QUITO202, ELECTION CAMPAIGN KICKOFF CONTENTIOUS

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09QUITO202**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">09QUITO202</a>	<a href="#">2009-03-24 17:31</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Quito</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.eluniverso.com/2011/04/24/1/1355/cable-198604.html>

VZCZCXYZ0007  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0202/01 0831731  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 241731Z MAR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0189  
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 8054  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 4116  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3466  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR LIMA 3114  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 4208

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000202

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EC](#)  
SUBJECT: ELECTION CAMPAIGN KICKOFF CONTENTIOUS

REF: 08 QUITO 616

Classified By: Ambassador Heather Hodges for reason 1.4 (D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: T...

id: 198604  
date: 3/24/2009 17:31  
refid: 09QUITO202  
origin: Embassy Quito  
classification: CONFIDENTIAL  
destination: 08QUITO616  
header:  
VZCZCXYZ0007  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0202/01 0831731  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 241731Z MAR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0189  
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 8054  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 4116  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3466  
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----- header ends -----

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Two weeks into the 45-day campaign period leading up to the April 26 elections, the National Electoral Council is wrestling with controlling government propaganda. President Correa will likely win in the first round, but he is not assured the strong National Assembly majority and local wins he seeks. End Summary.

#### THE STAKES

¶2. (SBU) The 45-day campaign period started March 10 and is scheduled to end on April 23, three days before the elections. At stake are the offices of president and vice president, 124 National Assembly seats, 46 prefects and vice prefects (who govern provinces), 221 mayors, and 1,581 city councilors. Five Andean Parliament members and 3,985 members of rural parish boards will be elected June 14, together with the presidential second round, if needed.

¶3. (SBU) Many opposition parties appear to believe that mounting presidential campaigns will help their candidates for other offices even if there is no chance of beating Correa. Eight candidates are running for the presidency after two were disqualified. President Correa's top opponents are: 1) banana magnate Alvaro Noboa of the National Action Institutional Renewal Party, who out-pollled Correa in the first round in 2006, and 2) former president Lucio Gutierrez of the Patriotic Society Party, a retired army colonel who took part in a coup d'etat that toppled President Mahuad in 2000, was elected to the presidency in 2002, and ousted from office in 2005 after widespread popular discontent. Correa also has opposition on his left, notably Marta Roldos, heading a coalition between her Ethics and Democracy Movement and the Democratic Pole Movement.

¶4. (SBU) Candidate selection was hard fought within Correa's Proud and Sovereign Fatherland (PAIS) movement due to the range of views (from the center to far left) and different groups. The PAIS political bureau chose the candidates for

some key positions. For the rest, PAIS held open primaries on January 25, but turnout was quite modest and the process was plagued with irregularities, including ballots not printed correctly and provinces where the ballots never arrived. In three provinces voting was suspended. Those irregularities translated into discontent of candidates, with some of them publicly questioning the process. In response, PAIS applied sanctions, ranging from disqualifying candidacies to expelling members from PAIS. Other parties held closed primaries or none at all.

#### CAMPAIGN RULES AND TRANSGRESSORS

¶5. (SBU) In an attempt to give all candidates the same chance of being heard, the 2008 constitution's transition regime established public financing of the 2009 campaign for advertising in the written press, television, radio, and street signs. Candidates are prohibited from using their own funds for advertising or giving out campaign gifts or donations. The new National Electoral Council, an interim body appointed in October 2008, will disburse \$35 million for election advertising.

¶6. (SBU) President Correa's Saturday radio and television addresses are continuing during the campaign. The National Electoral Council has stated that no rules are broken as long as Correa does not request that the audience vote for or against a candidate or political party. The National Electoral Council's rationale is that the broadcasts are not financed with public funds because stations voluntarily air them. However, Correa has not hesitated during these addresses in making comments aimed at undermining his opponents in the presidential race and making clear that voting for his movement would allow the government to make further progress with the "citizen revolution."

¶7. (SBU) While Correa is not the only candidate who has been accused of violating the campaign rules, he is the one who has the most public exposure and impact. His opponents and many commentators criticize this advantage. Jose Toledo, former News Vice President for the three television channels seized by the government last year from the Isaias brothers (Reftel), resigned on February 27 arguing that some candidates expected priority access to television programs.

¶8. (SBU) In the face of mounting criticism, the National Electoral Council approved rules on March 4 aimed at controlling unlawful campaigning. During the campaign period, candidates may appear in the radio, television, and press only if it is financed with allocated public funds, subject to fines for violations. All official government communication is prohibited 48 hours before the elections, thus supposedly ruling out Correa's April 25 TV/radio address.

¶9. (SBU) The dispute over campaign rules came to a head on March 6 when the National Electoral Council imposed a \$650 dollar fine on the Correa presidential campaign for a government TV spot extolling the citizen revolution, to the tune of "Hey Jude." The government said the advertisement's purpose was to promote optimism, but with its frequent use of the PAIS slogan and images of Correa on posters in the background, the National Electoral Council considered it campaigning. Correa appealed the fine, arguing that he did not appear in the advertisement. The mastermind behind the Correa government's constant advertising, Administration and Communications Secretary Vinicio Alvarado, met March 12 with the National Electoral Council to discuss official advertising and agreed to suspend the controversial advertisement during the campaign. He also agreed not to use the slogans "the fatherland now belongs to everyone" and the "citizen revolution" in other government propaganda. Despite this agreement, the "Hey Jude" ad continued to air for two more days.

#### POLLING DATA SHOWS MANY RACES COMPETITIVE

¶10. (SBU) Three polling firms give Correa a lead of about 40 points over his opponents. Santiago Perez, who is considered

the government's pollster, estimates that Correa will receive 53% of the vote, followed by Lucio Gutierrez with 13% and Alvaro Noboa with 11%. Pollsters differ as to whether the runner-up will be Gutierrez or Noboa, but in either scenario a runoff election appears unlikely. Under Ecuador's new constitution, a runoff is not necessary if the winner reaches at least 40% of valid votes and comes out more than 10 points ahead of the runner-up, or if the winner receives more than 50% of valid votes.

¶11. (SBU) Pollster Santiago Cuesta believes that Correa has popular support, but that such support does not translate into votes for other PAIS candidates. Opinion Profiles reported 68% of those surveyed intended to support the reelection of Guayaquil's Mayor Nebot, compared to 16% for Correa's candidate, Maria de los Angeles Duarte. In Guayas province, opposition candidate Jimmy Jairala was reported to have at least a 10-point lead in the race for prefect over Correa's sister Pierina. In Quito, the campaign for the mayor's office is competitive. In Cuenca (Ecuador's third largest city), the PAIS candidate is in a tight race with the incumbent mayor. The incumbents in other large coastal cities, such as Machala and Manta, are polling strongly against their PAIS rivals.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) Correa's bid for reelection, in spite of a struggling economy, will likely be successful in the first round. His government programs to benefit the poor, appeals to nationalism, and disproportionate access to the mass media make him a very tough competitor. The opposition, which has not been able to regroup after the last four lost elections, does not offer a compelling alternative on the national level. We credit the National Electoral Council for taking a stab at leveling the playing field. National Assembly seats and local offices are what is really at play.

HODGES

=====CABLE ENDS=====